(b) if so, whether Government are considering to evolve some institutional mechanism to ensure better implementation, control and monitoring of projects so that the plan outlay is utilised in higher proportions and the accountability is fixed for the lapses, if any, in this regard; and

(c) if so, the broad features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI DILIPKUMAR MANSUKHLAL GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Ministry of Shipping has impressed upon the Chairmen of Major Port Trusts and Heads of other organizations in the Port Sector on the need for critically reviewing the plan schemes and monitoring the pace of plan expenditure in order to ensure financial discipline and better expenditure management. Implementation of the schemes included in Annual Plan 2003-04 are being regularly reviewed and monitored closely with a view to ensuring optimum utilization of the funds.

Clamping age restrictions on ships

2818. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA : Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are thinking of clamping age restrictions on ships, on its territorial waters, aiming at averting tragedies like sinking of vessels etc.;

(b) if so, the impact of such restrictions on crude imports and rice/ wheat/sugar exports, etc. has been studied fully; and

(c) whether it would be possible to evolve an effective mechanism to implement and monitor such orders both in case of the Indian-registered and the foreign-registered vessels?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI DILIPKUMAR MANSUKHLAL GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir. Guidelines have been issued laying down age norms to be followed in the case of crude oil and product tankers on international voyages to and from any Indian port, with effect from 1st April, 2004. These guidelines, issued by Director General (Shipping) on 14th August, 2003, are in partial modification of the Circular dated 11th June, 2003.

(b) Since the guidelines are applicable only to single hull tankers older than 25 years, there is no likelihood of guidelines affecting the crude import trade. There will not be any adverse impact on the export of rice/wheat/sugar etc. as these commodities are carried by bulk carriers, which are not covered by these guidelines.

(c) Yes, Sir. There already exists a monitoring mechanism in the form of Port State Control and Flag State Control.

Assistance for upliftment of dalits

†2819. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA : Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many State Governments have still not obtained the assistance given by the Centre for the upliftment of dalits;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps Government are going to take for betterment of those States, who are deprived of these facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Economic condition of muslims

2820. MAULANA OBAIDULLAH KHAN AZMI : Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the economic condition of Muslims in the country has deteriorated during the last three years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps being taken to ameliorate their condition?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI NAGMANI) : (a) No separate study or survey has been made by this Ministry regarding the economic condition of any particular religious community.

(b) Does not arise.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.